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President:	Mr. Verbeke (Vice-President)	(Belgium)
later:	Mr. Akram (President)	(Pakistan)

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In the absence of Mr. Akram (Pakistan), Mr. Verbeke (Belgium), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance (*continued*) (A/60/86-E/2005/77, A/60/87-E/2005/78, A/60/89-E/2005/79 and E/2005/48)

First panel discussion on Lessons learned from the recent Indian Ocean earthquake/tsunami disaster: response challenges

1. **Mr. Egeland** (Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator), moderator, said that the emergency relief operation in response to the tsunami had been the most effective ever seen. While local communities, Governments of affected nations, and the international community had all contributed to its success, a major contributing factor had been the effective use of military assets. The World Food Programme (WFP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) had been in the forefront of the international response and more than 500 non-governmental organizations had worked with national authorities and intergovernmental organizations on the ground. The private sector had provided billions of dollars.

2. It was now time to consider the lessons learned, look to the future and meet the even greater challenge of reconstruction. He hoped that the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 would help prevent such devastation and loss of life in the future.

3. **Mr. Royat** (Deputy Coordinating Minister for People's Welfare, Indonesia) said that property damage and loss of life could be reduced by awareness-raising and disaster preparedness. Local, national and regional response systems needed to strengthened, and strong partnerships could enhance the effectiveness of aid. Greater capacity and shared technology would enable communities to respond more rapidly.

4. Greater priority should be given to making risk management and reduction part of sustainable development planning. Funding agencies should seriously consider putting more money into developing preventative and resilient approaches throughout the region. A more systematic approach that included all sectors of risk management should likewise be developed.

5. Indonesia had established the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Agency (BRR) which was responsible for coordination and tracking project demands and needs. The roles of the national and provincial disaster coordination committees were being evaluated with a view to focusing more attention on other vulnerable regions of the country. The next task was to examine how Indonesia could build a more responsive and competent disaster management system.

6. The tsunami disaster had demonstrated the value of united action in support of humanitarian values. The lessons learned were that (a) community preparedness needed to be increased; (b) rapid response mechanisms should be improved; (c) international agencies should have a common agenda; (d) the United Nations should be the coordinator for donor agencies; and (e) global cooperation for early detection systems was vital.

7. **Mr. Goh** Kee Nguan (Singapore Armed Forces) said that Singapore had launched the largest humanitarian aid and disaster relief operation in its history, in response to the tsunami. Working through the Singapore Armed Forces, it had dispatched relief supplies, a medical team and a humanitarian assistance support group within a few days. From the third week onwards, it continued to work with other military forces, United Nations agencies, and international and non-governmental organizations by providing ground information and transportation to facilitate access into Meulaboh. The military had then withdrawn so that the United Nations and civilian agencies could proceed with their relief operations.

8. One of the key factors for the operation's success was the ability to establish goodwill and trust on the ground. With that in mind, the military forces had adopted a spirit of partnership and cooperation with every stakeholder, particularly the Indonesian authorities and the United Nations agencies. Cultural sensitivity and understanding were equally important.

9. Another key factor was the need to apply the aid with precision. The coordinating roles played by the Indonesian authorities, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the United Nations Joint Logistics Centre (UNJLC) and WFP had been instrumental in bringing the right assistance to the right people.

10. The Singapore Government had also set up a regional coordination centre in Singapore to coordinate relief operations to countries hit by the tsunami. To

support aid distribution, Singapore had made its air and naval facilities, warehousing and logistics facilities available to the United Nations and other aid agencies.

11. The experience in Indonesia had demonstrated that military forces and civilian agencies could complement each other in disaster relief efforts. Military forces were able to respond quickly with emergency relief assistance in the initial stages but could not sustain disaster relief efforts over the long term. In order for such collaboration to work, both military and civilian agencies needed to understand each other's capabilities and establish procedures for future cooperation.

12. **Ms. Wahlstrom** (Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator) said that positive elements in the relief operation had included the strong leadership provided by the Secretary-General and the Emergency Relief Coordinator; the immediate availability of resources, which had allowed the relief workers to focus on the job itself; and the excellent working relationship established at the field level by a large number of actors.

13. One of the lessons learned was that Governments under strong stress needed support from the international community to coordinate mechanisms. Although initially all the actors had been able to agree on priorities, differences had eventually emerged. The ability to adhere to a strict framework was therefore a key factor. The fact that the Governments themselves had been allowed to decide what needed to be done had contributed to the overall success of the operation.

14. Governments and the United Nations needed to focus on building national disaster response capacities. Coordination mechanisms should be strengthened so that local teams would be able to deal with large influxes of relief workers.

15. With respect to the United Nations system, its focus on country-level engagement had been a good investment. Resources had been mobilized quickly, with the help of the non-governmental organizations and bilateral donors. Coordination in certain areas had also been very effective. Discussions were currently being held on how to improve total capability and predictability of resources.

16. **Mr. Graisse** (Senior Deputy Executive Director, World Food Programme (WFP)) said that joining forces with new allies, including the military and private corporations, the World Food Programme had launched a massive operation. Within hours, through its Immediate Response Account, it had begun providing emergency food by using existing stocks and diverting vessels from other destinations in the region. Over the past six months it had provided supplies to two million beneficiaries in the region. WFP quickly learned that, while the supply lines into the region worked well, the challenge lay in getting the food to affected people when both supply routes and infrastructure had been washed away.

17. The emergency operation had received air support from United Nations Humanitarian Air Services (UNHAS); a United Nations Joint Logistics Centre (UNJLC), supplied from the regional WFP warehouse in Cambodia, had been established to provide coordination and communications. Some 300 staff members from around the world had been temporarily reassigned to the area.

18. Six months after the disaster, 1.8 million people in the Indian Ocean region were beneficiaries of food supplies. The operation was moving from relief to recovery, and the focus in the second half of 2005 would be on rehabilitation, through targeted feeding for vulnerable groups, food-for-work programmes, mother and child health initiatives and school feeding programmes.

19. In addition to the lessons learned by each agency regarding its own planning and implementation, some overall issues had emerged. Especially in Indonesia, early military cooperation had been critical for the delivery of relief to isolated populations. The humanitarian community must work harder to improve communication with the military. A similar observation could be made regarding the private sector: its response had been overwhelming and had been indispensable at the early stages of operations. Those linkages needed to be more systematic at all times, not just in disaster situations. One of the keys to success had been the rapid establishment of air support and augmented logistics, including such services as cargo prioritization. The maximum use of sea and air assets had made up for the lack of roads and land capacity. In future, the focus should be on averting early bottlenecks, while ensuring flexibility in how that was accomplished. Constant vigilance was required to target resources accurately, especially given the initial difficulty in locating and estimating the number of

people affected. The agencies must meet the challenge of increasing recovery capacity and must help Governments restore self-reliance through rapid rehabilitation.

20. Through the efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Tsunami Recovery, the United Nations had a unique opportunity to join with Governments and the private sector to identify transferable best practices. Descriptions of tsunami relief and response contained many superlatives, but no effort would have been possible without support from donor countries and the people of the affected countries themselves.

21. **Ms. Veneman** (Executive Director, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)) said that lives had been saved by quick medical evacuation, health and medical supplies, vaccinations, clean water and food. Children had not died from preventable disease and most had returned to school within two months of the disaster, due to the commitment of resources and swift response.

22. In the recovery phase, it was important to maintain commitment and momentum and strengthen coordination among all partners. The resources generated must be used to help Governments restore livelihoods and health and education services without creating new inequities. UNICEF was building 325 new schools to better standards than the ones being replaced, and was working to improve capacity to handle water, nutrition and child protection. Governments had taken swift action to safeguard children against trafficking and unregulated adoption, and those efforts must continue through support for preventive measures including birth registration, keeping children in school and providing poor families with alternative livelihoods. The world was watching how its unprecedented outpouring of support was being used.

23. **Ms. Katen** (Pfizer, Inc.) said that, as a representative of the private sector, she felt a sense of duty to convey the commitment of the business community to help shoulder the load in humanitarian aid. Pfizer was a for-profit enterprise, with a responsibility to bring value both to customers and to shareholders in a high-risk environment. Many of the medical breakthroughs in the past 50 years had come from the private sector, which had developed a strong cultural sense of social responsibility. Furthermore, managing risk had forced companies to master disciplines that could make them strong partners in the supply and delivery of humanitarian aid. The private sector had never before engaged with the public sector in an emergency response of such scale; however, its work in global efforts against trachoma, malaria and HIV/AIDS had tested its partnerships with UNICEF, WHO and others, and it was also active in the Global Compact. When the tsunami hit, those partnerships had helped it work with United Nations agencies at very short notice.

24. At a recent discussion on tsunami relief efforts, between the United Nations and Business Roundtable, it had been agreed that the private sector could do a better job of disaster relief the next time around if it started working right away with the public sector to improve coordination tools. The Business Roundtable, which represented a range of industries, had announced the establishment of a Partnership for Disaster Relief that would develop a database of private sector resources that could help channel goods, services, finances and skills swiftly to non-governmental organizations and multilateral agencies.

25. Her company's reaction to the tsunami had been personal as well as humanitarian for it had lost 22 colleagues in the disaster. It had immediately donated $10 million in cash relief, followed by more than $40 million in medicines and health products. It had worked with United Nations partners and Governments to offer manpower — experts in public health, supply chain management, disease management and water engineering — through an internal mechanism called the Global Health Fellows. That programme routinely sent experts on a rotating basis to help regions solve public health problems. Meanwhile, at the New York headquarters, experts had worked through global information, supply-chain and compliance systems to ensure that skills and supplies complied with WHO guidelines and reached people in need.

26. In future operations of that nature, the private and public sectors must understand and respect each other's strengths and motives. Three factors had enabled Pfizer to help in tsunami relief: the willingness of the United Nations team to embrace what it offered, the wide range of skills offered in addition to money and medicines, and its demonstrated willingness to learn. The private sector contribution could be even more

effective with more trust, transparency and tools, overseen by rigorous governance.

27. **Mr. de Torrente** (Executive Director, Medecins Sans Frontieres — USA), describing the experience of his organization in responding to the aftermath of the tsunami, said that the emergency needs of the affected population, particularly their medical needs, had been relatively limited. In contrast to conflict situations, the dead had far outnumbered the injured requiring emergency medical and surgical treatment. Although vaccination coverage was low for most of the affected population, their nutritional and health status was generally good, and most of the homeless had found temporary shelter soon after the disaster, greatly reducing the chances of epidemic outbreaks. The most serious disease directly related to the tsunami was tetanus; 106 cases had been documented in Aceh in the month following the event. In all the affected countries, local solidarity had saved many more lives than international organizations, yet that fact had been widely underreported. Outside of the coastal areas, countries had been able to function.

28. The tsunami had generated an exceptional outpouring of generosity on an international level. The massive deployment of Governments, military forces, and United Nations agencies had created a humanitarian "traffic jam" in many areas. For many non-governmental organizations, available funds had exceeded the capacity to carry out relevant emergency activities, putting the issue of coordination in a different light. National and regional authorities had done their best to coordinate the massive influx of aid; the real problem had been how to properly identify and respond to actual needs. External assistance was most relevant when it filled a gap that local actors had less capacity or experience in addressing. For example, MSF field teams, working with a network of experienced national psychologists, had carried out programmes to address the trauma caused by the tsunami, perhaps their most valuable contribution to the affected population. The presence of international organizations could also help guard against discrimination and inequity in the local response, particularly when a natural disaster struck in areas of underlying conflict or political tension, as in Aceh or Sri Lanka. Moreover, there had been shortfalls in the local response that warranted external support, for instance water and sanitation in displaced persons camps and a lack of shelter materials in the initial weeks.

29. As the tsunami was generating massive attention, many non-governmental organizations and United Nations agencies had warned, to no avail, that it should not distract efforts from other humanitarian crises such as that in the Niger. A key principle in humanitarian assistance was proportionality, and aid providers and donor governments must ask themselves how that principle was currently being implemented.

30. What was most remarkable about the tsunami was the unprecedented level of funding and the scope of the international relief effort. It was critical to recognize that the acute emergency phase was limited in scope and time: recovery must begin as soon as possible and emergency relief efforts should not delay it. The initiatives taken in rebuilding economic means that directly benefited the affected population, such as boat rebuilding for the fishing communities, were important.

31. **Mr. Cano** (Nicaragua) said that he would like to hear more about possibilities for an early warning system at the regional and national level for all natural disasters, and how synergies could be created. He was interested in plans for capacity-building at the national and regional levels to prepare for such disasters as hurricanes and earthquakes. He would also like to know what lessons had been learned on providing prompt and updated information to communities threatened by natural disasters.

32. **Mr. Berteling** (Observer for the Netherlands) said that the global response to the tsunami disaster had been outstanding and had mobilized not only the usual partners but also new donor countries as well as the private sector. It would be useful to conduct a review of the humanitarian response and see what lessons could be learned. His country supported increased cooperation and coordination between civil and military partners under the leadership of the United Nations. Guidelines should be established for future emergencies, with special attention to best practices in regard to financial transparency and accountability.

33. **Mr. Hyun** Cho (Republic of Korea) stressed the importance of cooperation between civil society and the military and referred to his own country's experience, from which useful lessons were already being drawn. The laws and regulations governing military assistance for humanitarian emergencies were

being revised in Korea to enable it to improve its response capacity still further. International coordination, in which the United Nations had a leading role to play, was crucial. He pointed out that in his country the tsunami had not diverted resources but been a wake-up call, heightening public awareness of the importance of humanitarian aid.

34. **Mr. Trautwein** (Germany) wondered whether the United Nations could also collect and evaluate national experiences in civil/military coordination. Referring in that connection to the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report (A/60/86-E/2005/77), he welcomed the development of a financial tracking system and looked forward to the improvement of reporting and accounting mechanisms. Germany had been very actively promoting the development of early warning systems and would be hosting its third major conference on the subject in Bonn in March 2006.

35. **Mr. Goldberg** (Canada) asked how the private sector could be integrated into the existing rapid response mechanisms. He also applauded the engagement of civil society in humanitarian assistance and recovery operations and expressed the hope that the Council might organize a dedicated discussion on the subject in the future.

36. **Ms. Wahlstrom** (Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator) stressed the need for a commitment by the international community to follow-up on the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 in view of the vital importance of early warning systems. Noting that the private sector had responded to the emergency with resources that were not necessarily available through the intergovernmental system, while the engagement of the military in rescue efforts had created a precedent for humanitarian action in the future, she said that an evaluation should be made of the implications of those developments for disaster response predictability.

37. **Mr. Goh** Kee Nguan (Singapore Armed Forces), stressing the valuable role of partnership between the military and civil society in humanitarian assistance initiatives, called for continuing development of interactions between them. United Nations personnel should be involved in military conferences and exercises and likewise military personnel should be brought into civil society initiatives, to enhance mutual understanding. It would be also worthwhile to set up a civil/military joint working group to define procedures for cooperation.

38. **Mr. Royat** (Deputy Coordinating Minister for People's Welfare, Indonesia) stressed the importance of reaching communities and households and giving them training in disaster preparedness. The Council might usefully discuss how to improve community capacity-building in that respect. Local economic development needed to be discussed with the private sector in the context of post-emergency relief.

Second panel discussion on Lessons learned from the recent Indian Ocean earthquake/tsunami disaster: recovery challenges

39. *Mr. Akram (Pakistan), President, took the Chair.*

40. **The President**, welcomed the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Tsunami Recovery, Mr. William J. Clinton, who was mobilizing Governments, civil society and the private sector in a coordinated response to the humanitarian crisis. By participating in the Council's discussion he was also showing his support for the United Nations and for the Economic and Social Council.

41. **Mr. Verbeke** (Belgium), moderator, said that the goodwill expressed after the disaster needed to be translated into coordinated, concrete relief action. Part of the Council's work was to draw lessons from the experience and provide policy guidance for the future. While recovery was bringing hope and progress, it required the international community to maintain its commitment to the lasting rehabilitation of the affected countries and to continue to help them in their reconstruction and risk reduction efforts.

42. **Mr. Clinton** (Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Tsunami Recovery) said that for the past five months he had been seeking to monitor a more coordinated and transparent process of recovery, promote a risk reduction and prevention strategy and identify a set of best practices for the future. The concern to build back better was at the heart of his efforts and to that end he had convened a Global Consortium of affected Governments, United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations, and corporate leaders. During those months his belief in the inherent value of the United Nations had been confirmed. Ongoing operational challenges were being addressed by United Nations teams in each country, which were giving valuable support to Governments.

But the momentum had to be maintained and the pace of recovery had to be accelerated.

43. Disaster prevention and training were crucial to saving lives; he cited the case of the schoolgirl who, recognizing the warning signs, had enabled some 100 people to move out of danger. Building codes must be observed in earthquake zones, vegetation buffers must be created to protect coastal communities. The Hyogo Framework for Action laid out strategic goals and priorities for action that must be adhered to. The Council could play a valuable part in developing disaster risk awareness and encouraging integration of early tsunami warning systems into other warning systems, the aim being to arrive at an integrated South Asian early warning system for the whole region.

44. The response to the emergency had been unprecedented and swift, but the most difficult task — recovery — still lay ahead. Too many people were still living in tents, even though the resources to build semi-permanent shelters were available. A sound institutional and coordinated financial framework was in place. The Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Agency (BRR), set up in Indonesia, had allocated US$ 700 million for reconstruction projects. Comprehensive needs assessments had been completed in all the affected countries and funds had been secured to meet those needs. The one exception was Maldives, which had graduated from least developed country status shortly before the tsunami struck. He suggested that the Maldives should be temporarily restored to that status so that it could be eligible for the corresponding assistance, until such time as the tourists returned and helped to restore its economy.

45. He drew attention to the tracking system developed by the global consortium which could be consulted online and provided data on time lines and costs. The tracking system, which he described as outstanding, could be consulted to monitor the funding of the recovery process and could serve as a model for the future.

46. There had also been real progress in the efforts to make the recovery more of a "bottom-up" process, such as Sri Lanka's agreement to establish a joint implementation mechanism. That country's President also deserved support not criticism for her reconciliation efforts.

47. Anti-corruption measures were being vigorously embraced. While the possibility of corruption and waste could never be completely excluded, the affected countries were making serious effort to be fully accountable for the money donated. The common financial tracking database, once in place, would also facilitate accountability by allowing anyone, including the press, to monitor the financial situation.

48. The next stage would involve executing the plan of action in every affected county and solving any outstanding local disputes. There were also significant capacity constraints but donors would respond positively to requests if the situation was handled with sensitivity. In Aceh, for example, 70 per cent of governmental buildings had been destroyed and in Sri Lanka 100,000 houses needed to be rebuilt. However, such challenges were also opportunities to have a sustainable home building industry with people trained in a sector of the economy that had not previously existed. Nevertheless, that capacity would have to be built quickly.

49. There were still some unresolved governmental policies that would slow down recovery, such as the coastal zoning question in Sri Lanka, the lack of timber resources in Aceh and the identification of and payment for alterative settlement sites in India. Another issue raised repeatedly was the application of import duties and taxes in Sri Lanka to foreign remittances and equipment imported by non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Efforts were under way to address all those issues.

50. While the international community obviously had the knowledge to build back better houses, schools and health facilities, not to mention disaster prevention and mitigation systems, the real challenge was how to build back a better capacity for economic diversification and growth. Many of the places destroyed were small fishing villages, where it was not self-evident how to diversify and upgrade the economy. Some of the most impressive and the quickest work he had seen already under way was in Tamil Nadu, India, where local NGOs had established production cooperatives with the widows of fisherman or with women whose own boats had been destroyed. He was confident that local people would work out for themselves how to diversify and build back better, provided there was enough microcredit and other systematic support. The most exciting developments in that regard were taking place in Aceh, where the World Bank was providing

30 million dollars for a land titling project which was needed because many of the records in the cities had been destroyed and also because many of the people in the villages had never had the titles to their land. The world's poor people had roughly 5 trillion dollars in assets that could not be used for economic growth, owing to the absence of the titles needed to obtain credit. He welcomed the World Bank's forward-thinking approach and hoped that the other countries affected would make use of that facility.

51. The non-governmental organizations still had over 2 billion dollars to spend on tsunami relief. While long-term reconstruction might require additional funding in the future, present efforts were focusing on spending the available money in an honest, effective and coordinated way that facilitated the recovery.

52. **Mr. Thomas** (United Kingdom), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the European Union was providing 2.3 billion euros for humanitarian and rehabilitation programmes. Lessons could be learned from the tsunami experience to improve humanitarian assistance in such areas as coordination, coherence, timing and funding, and the September Summit should cover those issues in its conclusions. Speaking on behalf of his own delegation, he said that the United Nations had performed well in coordinating efforts in the relief phase. However, coordination had lost momentum in moving from the immediate relief phase to recovery and planning for reconstruction. The Special Envoy's comments regarding the need for improved coordination among the relief agencies were therefore particularly relevant.

53. While it was important to have realistic expectations about the timeframe for reconstruction, there had been less progress than hoped for in restoring livelihoods and in reducing the need for temporary shelter, particularly in Banda Aceh. Continued support should therefore be given to the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Agency (BRR) to ensure more rapid progress in the coming months. Donors must fulfil their pledges, however, they must be reassured that the money was being spent wisely. In that respect, the role of the United Nations in tracking donor contributions and monitoring their effectiveness would be crucial. The response to the tsunami had shown that reform of the international humanitarian system was needed and the opportunity to drive forward such reform must not be missed. He hoped that the new public interest in emergencies would lead to a better response to less well publicized crises, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. It was clear that disaster risk reduction must be placed higher on the international agenda and he welcomed the progress made to that effect by the World Conference on Disaster Reduction, held in January 2005 in Kobe, Japan.

54. **Mr. Jenie** (Indonesia) asked the Special Envoy what experience from the emergency relief phase was most useful for the reconstruction and rehabilitation phase. He also wondered how to sustain the interest of the media, especially during the important latter phase.

55. **Mr. Nishikawa** (Japan) said that his Government had made 500 million dollars available for relief and recovery immediately following the tsunami and was prepared to contribute further to the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the affected areas. His delegation fully appreciated the Special Envoy's comments concerning bottlenecks to development in affected areas and asked what efforts the international community could undertake to ease them. In connection with efforts for better recovery, he welcomed the international recovery platform established in May 2005 and said that it would be another good mechanism for providing useful information to the Special Envoy's team.

56. **Ms. Thomas** (International Council of Voluntary Agencies) suggested that the Office of the Special Envoy should provide a progress report, with an overview of the results of the various operations carried out to help the affected populations, in time for the anniversary of the tsunami. She also asked the Special Envoy how local communities could be empowered to settle their own land-shortage problems and how he viewed his own role in supporting and ensuring the use of structures for coordination with non-governmental organizations.

57. **Ms. Feller** (Mexico) asked the Special Envoy at what stage the international community should withdraw.

58. **Mr. Alim** (Bangladesh) said that the recent initiative to develop a tsunami warning and mitigation system for the Indian Ocean was welcome and he hoped that the entire globe would one day be covered by such systems. He agreed that a new strategy, policy and plan of action were needed to usher in an era of hope. His delegation would welcome further details on the four-point programme recently outlined by the

Special Envoy to redirect rebuilding programmes towards the right path.

59. **Mr. Clinton** (United Nations Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery), responding to the comments made by the representative of the United Kingdom, said that, while there had been a problem of corruption historically in some of the countries and some evidence of corruption in the immediate aftermath of the tsunami, all the tsunami-affected countries had set up accountability provisions and the United Nations system had also been given pro bono services by forensic accountants. Moreover, all the countries involved wanted to prove they could do what was right and they knew that further help would not be forthcoming if they lost the confidence of the donors. In his experience, a lack of capacity was a bigger problem than corruption in most developing countries since there was far less incentive for people to do the right thing without opportunities for success. For his part, he would continue to make every effort to protect against corruption, as would the leaders of the reconstruction efforts in the tsunami-affected countries and those in charge of the non-governmental organizations. While it was true that movement had been slow from the emergency phase to the recovery phase, reconstruction work was currently progressing quickly. For example, contracts had already been arranged in Sri Lanka for the construction of over 30,000 of the 70,000 or so houses required, and in Indonesia BRR had just completed 200 contracts for 700 million dollars.

60. Regarding the comment on general needs of other African countries, he welcomed the commitment by the Group of Eight (G8) to double aid to Africa and also expressed his support for the Millennium Development Goals. Spending the money raised specifically for tsunami relief appropriately, effectively and in a timely manner was the best way to help other countries that also needed help. That example could inspire support for other causes, such as a year devoted to raising funds for the eradication of malaria or tuberculosis, another for the achievement of universal primary education for children and so on.

61. With regard to the question of the representative of Indonesia concerning lessons learned in moving from the emergency phase to the reconstruction phase, he said that Indonesia should think long and hard before disbanding BRR, although slight changes in its mandate might be one option. Indonesia and Sri Lanka should keep their separate agencies, modelling them along existing lines and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in the United States of America. When a disaster occurred in the United States of America, for example, that Agency's coordination work with all national governmental agencies drastically shortened the effective response time. United Nations country teams working with NGOs, Governments and corporations had also proven to be effective. One reason why the United Kingdom had had one of the highest rates of per capita giving in the world in the aftermath of the tsunami was because the non-governmental organizations there had come together to avoid overlap, competition and waste. The lesson learned from that was therefore the need for a more permanent relationship between the international community (through the United Nations agencies), the international financial institutions and the non-governmental agencies. As to how to sustain media interest, he said that it was part of his job to keep the issue of tsunami relief in the news and that he would do his best in that respect.

62. Concerning the issue of bottlenecks, he said that it was important to decide when effective international action could be taken and when a bottleneck was a local question requiring local action. The issue of how far back to build from the coast in Sri Lanka was one example of a local question for its Government to resolve, whereas Indonesia's construction bottleneck could be eased by providing assistance to find more environmentally appropriate sources of timber.

63. With respect to the question on housing problems, he said that such issues were best addressed on a case-by-case basis and he reiterated that more systematic coordination was needed between NGOs and national Governments.

64. In response to the question raised by the representative of Mexico, he said that it would be time for the international community to leave when the physical and, insofar as possible, intangible elements of life in the affected areas had been built back better than before the tsunami. The affected countries and communities would be free at that stage to resume defining and building their own future.

65. He welcomed the comments by the representative of Bangladesh in support of the early warning system and noted that his office tried to pay special attention to the vulnerable populations in all the affected

countries, especially women. He also welcomed the kind of microcredit pioneered by the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh. The most important way to ensure that economies were built back better was to provide people with a steady stream of repayable credit and subsequent technical assistance. India, for example, had achieved immensely impressive and quick results by diversifying its economy using that approach.

66. **The President**, summing up, said that the Special Envoy had brought a message of hope for the people of the affected countries, the United Nations and the international community that they could work together despite their problems and, when challenged, that they could respond to human catastrophe and suffering.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.